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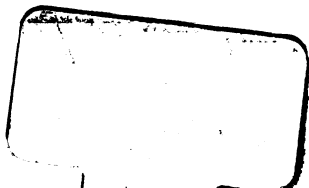


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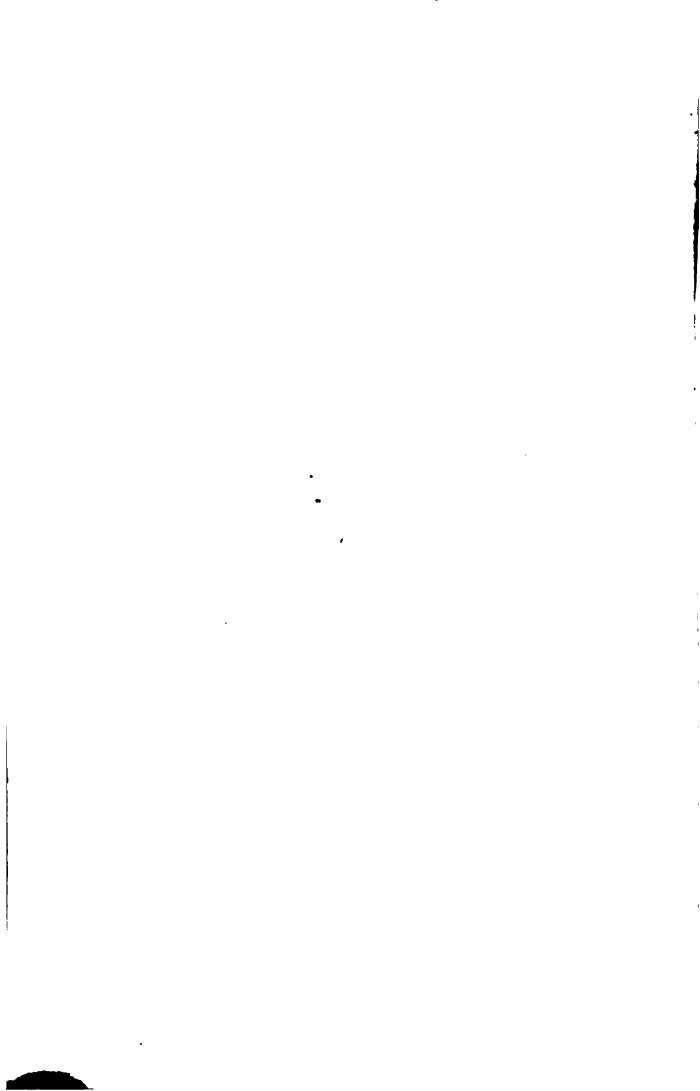
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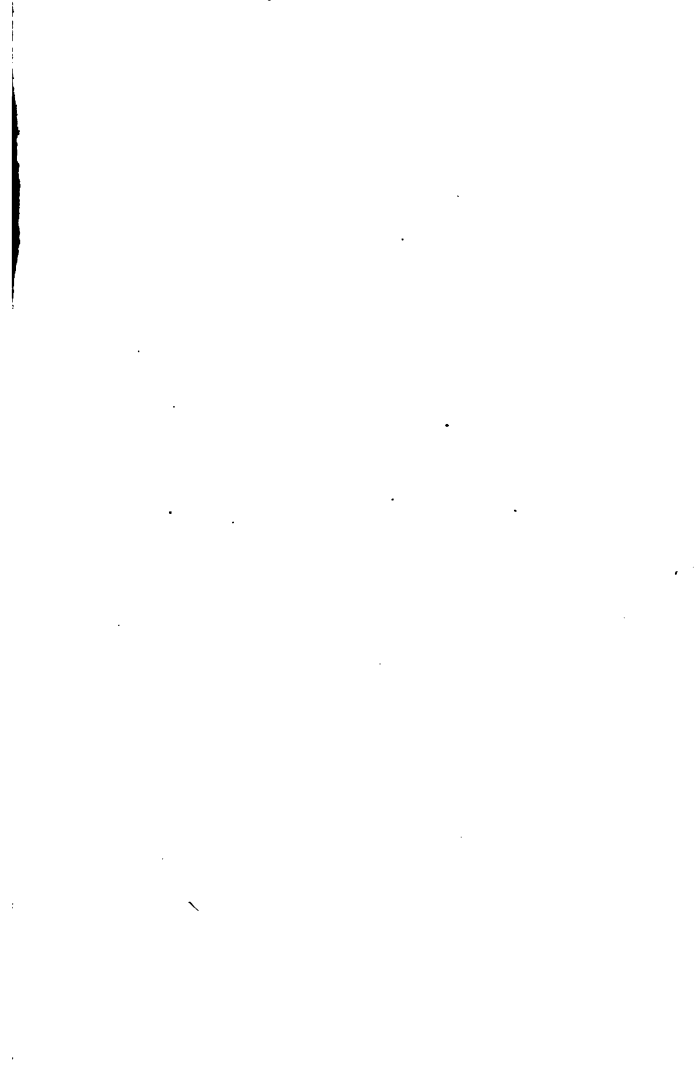
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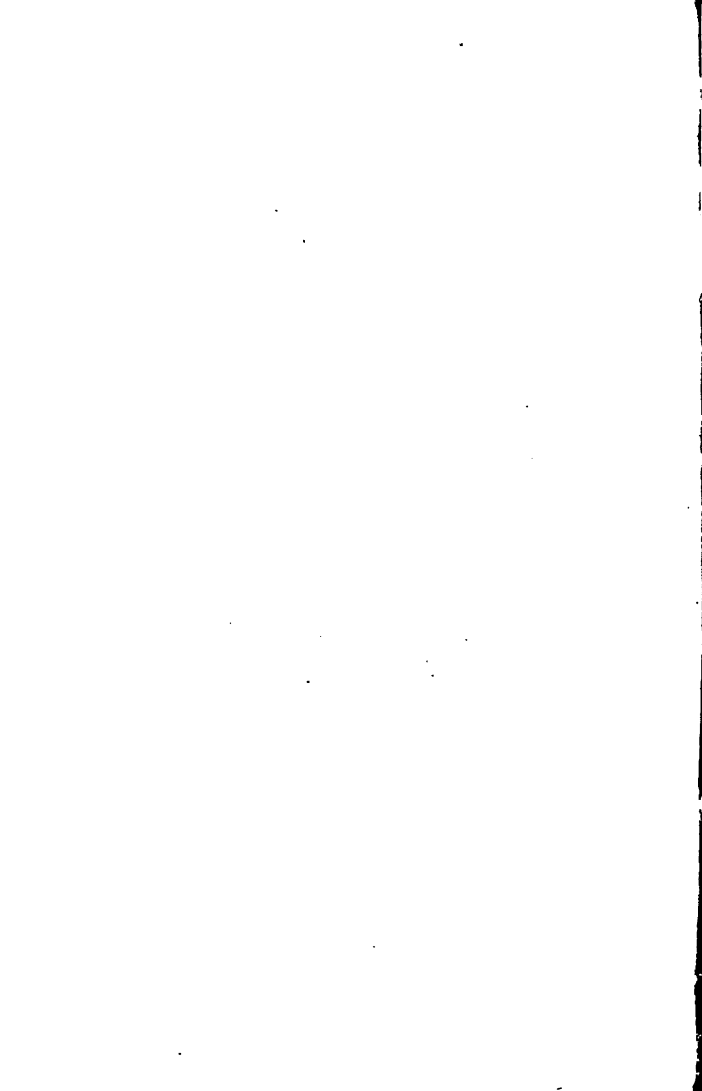


James F. Smith
Pres. of the
Church

Aug 25th 1870
Providence, R. I.







THE
ITINERANT'S WIFE:

HER

QUALIFICATIONS, DUTIES, TRIALS,
AND REWARDS.

BY REV. H. M. EATON.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages have been written under a deep sense of the high responsibilities that rest upon the class of persons designated on the title page, and from a conviction that the greatness of their duties and trials is not adequately appreciated by those for whom they are done and suffered. It is feared, too, that some who have assumed that responsible relation to the Church and the world, have done it without duly counting the cost, and consequently have found themselves entangled with unexpected difficulties, and oppressed with burdens that they have been ill prepared to endure. It is hoped, that the perusal of

this little book may serve the double purpose of warning any who otherwise might lightly undertake the great responsibilities that necessarily devolve on the wife of an itinerant Methodist minister, and of securing for those who are labouring to discharge their duties in that relation, that sympathy and support which their labours and sacrifices demand. If this shall be done, the work will accomplish the purpose contemplated in its composition by

THE AUTHOR.

KENT'S HILL, MAINE,
November, 1850.

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THE ITINERANT'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ITINERANT'S WIFE.

THE various relations of life, with their corresponding obligations and responsibilities, require in those who sustain them special qualifications for their several duties. The father of a family, the instructor of youth, the minister of the Gospel, the physician, the jurist, and the civil magistrate, all and severally need special qualifications for their respective callings, without which they will fail to accomplish, honourably and profitably, the work committed to them. The same remark applies, with much force and fitness, to the case of the wife of a Methodist itinerant minister. Various and important duties devolve upon her, arising

from her peculiar relations to society—duties not always unattended with peculiar trials and perplexities.

To perform these duties, and to endure these trials, in a manner befitting her position and relations in life, demand special gifts and qualifications. If these pages shall in any degree contribute to the aid of any of those in whose special behalf they are written, by securing for them the assistance that they require, and especially the sympathy of those for whom they labour and suffer, the purpose that has called them forth will be accomplished. Of her need in this matter none can be so fully sensible as herself; and next to her, such as share with her, though more remotely, the joys and sorrows of her mixed cup. To specify some of the qualifications specially needed by one so situated in life, is the purpose of the present chapter.

1. *The itinerant's wife should be a person of good common-sense.*

By this term is meant, a sound, practical judgment, a ready and correct perception of what is fitting and proper in the ordinary

affairs of life, and a lively appreciation of the duties and responsibilities arising from them. Without this qualification many other excellent qualities will be comparatively useless; for the most splendid talents and the highest attainments can but poorly atone for the want of common-sense.

This property is one that is required to be perpetually in use. She needs it on all occasions, and in all circumstances. It must teach her when to speak, and when to be silent; when to remain at home, and when to go abroad; when to be sprightly, and when to be grave; when to approve, and when to censure; and at what times to be in the kitchen, the nursery, or the parlour. It must dictate her course of conduct whether at home or abroad; in receiving and in giving; in buying and selling; in her intercourse with the aged and with the young; with the gay and with the sorrowful; with Christians and with irreligious persons.

More is expected of her by the public than of other persons, and generally her words and actions are considered with less

charity than are those of others. Her natural or acquired characteristics are often unfavourably construed. If she is reserved or taciturn, she becomes an object of suspicion, or is despised as ignorant, or regarded as haughty. If she is talkative and free in her communications, she is condemned as too forward, or as lacking the discretion and reserve that becomes her situation; and, perhaps, accused of usurping her husband's prerogatives. These are annoyances, which, though they may not be entirely curable, she may greatly abate by the exercise of the valuable commodity—common-sense.

Should the itinerant's wife be heard expressing dissatisfaction at her husband's appointments, and openly or by implication impugning the authorities of the Church, for not giving him a more eligible field of labour, as though she were best able to judge of his ministerial character and qualifications, she would certainly betray a great want of this highly-valuable qualification. Such ill-judged censures, especially if often repeated, would necessarily prejudice her

husband's reputation and ministerial usefulness among the people with whom he labours, as they would feel themselves to be despised by one who ought to esteem them, and to go out and in among them to do them good, and to sympathize in all their interests. Such persons will be very likely always to have the same causes of complaint, as they frequently create the evil of which they complain, by their most unwise and injudicious manner of speaking and acting on the subject.

If in coming to a new appointment she allows herself to descant upon the real or supposed faults of the former pastor, by so doing she will necessarily wound the feelings of his friends, and thus create a prejudice against herself, and probably against her husband too, in the minds of those who were warmly attached to their retiring minister. Such a course is not only unwise, it is positively wrong; and the minister's wife who allows herself thus to speak and act, will inevitably forfeit the confidence of the more discerning and pious members of the Church.

If she especially courts the favour of the wealthy and fashionable, mingling in their society with evident delight, while the poor of the Church or the neighbourhood are neglected and forgotten, her conduct in that matter will not be overlooked, but will be construed as an indication of the want of common-sense, and even a moderate share of piety.

If she is accustomed to speak of her own children—especially if it is done in their presence—as better than others, passing over their faults and magnifying their excellencies, failing to perceive that her tale is far more gratifying to herself than to her hearers, she assuredly exhibits a sad deficiency of the valuable property under consideration.

Without a good share of common-sense she will fail to gain and exert a wide and salutary influence—such as properly belongs to her position in society—over the more discreet and reliable persons of the community. Her society will not be coveted by them, her counsels will not be sought, nor her opinions received with deference

and esteem. With this noble endowment, however, she will obtain their regard and confidence. She will be freely and frequently consulted upon questions of interest to individuals and to society, and the opinions she utters will be respected, and her counsels pursued. This qualification will, indeed, to a good degree atone for the want of many more brilliant and showy ones; and will give to her who possesses it an influence in society that will do good to all with whom she may be associated.

2. *The itinerant's wife should have sufficient literary culture to fit her to occupy her proper place in society.*

This subject requires to be handled cautiously, lest the feelings of many wise and good persons should be wounded. It is a point upon which there is an unusual degree of sensitiveness; and those who are conscious of their deficiency in this matter, are generally least willing to be directly instructed in regard to it. The precise amount of learning necessary to qualify a person to be the wife of a Methodist minister, cannot be certainly defined. The call-

ing to which she is devoted when she becomes the wife of a Methodist minister, is itself a school, in which she will not speedily finish her education. In her intercourse with the various and dissimilar classes of persons among whom her lot is cast, she will find that she may learn something valuable from all of them. The degree of attainment previously required for admission into this school, cannot be definitely fixed. One person of very limited literary qualifications, may nevertheless be more useful than many others of far better advantages of that character. This matter cannot be submitted to a rigid and invariable rule. Many things are to be taken into account, and defects in some particulars are often compensated for by superior gifts in others.

It is not assumed that the itinerant's wife must be skilled in the learned languages, either ancient or modern, though such may be very desirable; nor is it necessary that she understand the higher branches of mathematics, though if she possessed that knowledge, it might be use-

ful to her; nor yet is it essential that she be accomplished in the arts of music, and embroidery, and painting, though these accomplishments might render her both more useful and agreeable; nor, indeed, should one be accounted disqualified for the station in question, nor as an *uneducated* person, in a very important sense, though she may never have been an inmate of a high school or seminary.

While we contend that it is not absolutely necessary for the itinerant's wife to be instructed in the languages, or mathematics, or to be skilled in instrumental music, we *do* contend that she ought to have a good English education, such as is taught in our public schools. *More* she *may* have to advantage; this amount she must have, or she will often find herself in a very awkward and unpleasant position in society, as she will be called to mingle not only with the poor and ignorant, but also with the better informed, and more refined portion of community.

With this essential attainment grafted upon a good stock of *common-sense*, she will

be prepared, on entering her responsible position in society, so to exercise her powers of mind, as daily to advance in knowledge ; and thus, by constantly adding to her present stock of information, she will be able to meet the reasonable expectations of an intelligent community.

In addition to this, however, it is important that she have a correct, and somewhat extensive knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity. She should be a student of the Bible, in which the religion of the Church is revealed. Not only should it be read, but *studied*, that she may be "sound in the faith," and not liable to "be carried about with every wind of doctrine," or blindly submit to the changing or changeless opinions of others. She should be able to form opinions for herself, and to maintain them by Scriptural authority.

As a Methodist, she should understand the views of her own Church, upon the essential points of Christian theology, that she may be prepared to act in concert with the companion of her life, who is set for the defence of the truth. This knowledge she

can obtain, as others have done in like circumstances, without the assistance of the schools; but not without applying her mind and heart to the study of the word of God, and the use of whatever helps are afforded for gaining a proper understanding of its sacred truths.

Nor should she be ignorant of the history of that branch of the Church of God with which her own temporal and eternal destiny is so intimately associated, and for whose growth and purity she is engaged to labour. This kind of knowledge is at once highly valuable and very easy to be obtained.^c With a mind well-informed on these matters, she will be ready to give satisfactory answers to the many questions that will be proposed to her concerning the denomination of Christians in which she holds so conspicuous a place, and by answering them to dispel the many erroneous opinions that are entertained by some persons of respectable

^c The "History of Methodism," by Rev. Dr. Bangs, and "Memorials of Methodism," by Rev. Abel Stevens, furnish, in an agreeable and compendious form, the kind of information designated in the text.

general intelligence, as to the facts and the character of Methodism.

The itinerant's wife should be a person of some general reading. A vast amount of valuable information is now afforded by our weekly religious newspapers. They contain especially excellent matter relative to the resources, the policy, and the success of the Church of Christ generally, and of the Methodist Episcopal Church particularly. They also furnish important information upon subjects of general interest to the intelligent reader. Whoever attentively reads the successive issues of one of these weekly sheets, will not fail to acquire a valuable store of useful knowledge.*

* The "Ladies' Repository" is a valuable periodical of our Church, published by order of the General Conference. This work is designed for females, and well-calculated to promote intelligent piety in our Church. Its editor and contributors are among the more learned and pious in our communion; and the itinerant's wife will find by a careful perusal of its pages, that it supplies her with a vast amount of useful information, not elsewhere easily obtained. It is a literary work, baptized with the spirit of Christianity, and consecrated to God upon the altar of the Church.

The wives of our young ministers especially, should be deeply impressed with the conviction, that there is no danger that they will know too much. Society has a right to expect more from them than from those who have come down to us from a former generation, whose facilities for gaining useful knowledge in their younger days were much more limited than those now enjoyed. As the public demand in this matter is perpetually increasing, corresponding efforts should be made to meet that demand. Time must be redeemed, and the mind must be applied with untiring energy and inextinguishable zeal. The motives by which they should be influenced in this matter, however, should be something higher than merely a wish to gratify public expectation. In all they do the glory of God should be the one unchanging and controlling consideration. This alone, with the pious heart, will be more inspiring, and will do more to render the load of duty easy, than all other influences combined.

A good fund of general information is not only the privilege of the young itine-

rant's wife, it will also prove to her a possession of inestimable value. It will exert a healthful influence upon her own mind, and at the same time give her a directing control upon others, that will tell with powerful effect upon their present usefulness and future destiny. It contributes largely to the necessary preparation of its possessor, to go forth accompanying the devoted herald of salvation, with whom her destiny is united, to aid him in his arduous duties, and to do valuable service for the Church and to the world.

3. *The itinerant's wife should be pious.*

To be pious is the privilege and the duty of all; but it is universally expected, that especially the wife of a minister will be pious, and of the wife of a Methodist minister, that she will be eminently so. Without piety, all other qualifications will avail but little. She may be eminently endowed with common-sense; and have a thorough education, so as to be able to shine as a star of the first magnitude in the literary heavens; still, if she is not evangelically pious, she is by no means qualified for her position.

The Church has reason to expect this of her, and even the ungodly expect it; and the want of it in her, would be an affliction to the one, and a disappointment and surprise to the other.

● A minister of the Gospel, however pious and devoted to his work, will be shorn of much of his strength, if his wife be an irreligious woman; or, if she be only a nominal Christian. She may be orthodox in her opinions, and correct in her habits of life; but if she is not a woman of faith, of prayer, and of humility, she is fatally unprepared for such a relation to the Church and the world. She has certainly "missed her calling;" for it cannot be, that a God of infinite wisdom ever designed that an unconverted woman should be the wife of a Methodist minister, or in other words, that a Methodist minister should marry an unconverted woman.

Her piety must be ardent, not stoical. With a heart full of Divine love should she enter upon every work connected with her high position. This will cause her to shine as a "light in a dark place." This will

make her influence as the "salt of the earth." This will constitute her an example to the Church which others may safely and profitably imitate.

Her piety should be uniform. Not that she can be absolutely the maker of her own feelings. Happy frames of mind, like other good gifts, "come down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning." Nor do we mean that her feelings will be invariably the same under all circumstances. Far from it; her piety may be uniform, though her feelings somewhat vary. Paul was as pious when "warning the people day and night with tears," as when he was "caught up to the third heavens." But she should so "live by faith on the Son of God," as at all times to derive all necessary assistance from Him who has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

If she thus lives she will not suffer great depressions of spirits, and actual destitution of enjoyment, which is always indicative of a radical defect in the religious experience of those who suffer them. Nor

will she, under the influence of violent excitements, become extravagant in sentiment, expression, or conduct. Her daily experience and religious progress will be "like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Clouds there may be occasionally in her heavens; but the sun of her prosperity will nevertheless shine. Hers is a life of faith; and Christ, the Sun of righteousness, is always apprehended. Storms and tempests may threaten to engulf her; but by the grace of God she will exult in the midst of them. Her anchor, "*hope*," is cast "within the veil;" and it only raises her higher as the storm increases about her. If her piety is uniform, whatever may be her outward circumstances she is still confident, and with St. Paul is enabled to say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."

Her piety should be cheerful. Too often is piety made to bear an austere and sour aspect, that renders its possessor forbidding and even terrible, especially to young per-

sons. The minds of some good people become depressed by contemplating the evils that are in the world, without considering at the same time the remedy offered in the Gospel. They have looked upon the various developments of sin in the world, until their hearts sunk within them, and have asked in desperation, "Who will show us any good?" These feelings are sometimes manifested in the gloomy countenances, and the expressions of sadness and despondency that at times come in and cast their shadow over the joys of our Christian communings. It should be carefully noted, that this sorrowful state of mind is not the result of faith but of unbelief, and as such should ever be shunned by all who are endeavouring to walk by faith. It is especially needful that the piety of the itinerant's wife should not be of this sombre character. Her piety should be cheerful, both for her own sake, who needs this strong consolation, and for the sake of others, who naturally look to her for support and comfort. She must rise above the depressions that come to her from outward causes, and by waiting on the

Lord renew her strength, so that she may "run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." Cheerful piety commends itself, especially to them "that labour and are heavy laden," while gloomy sorrowings repel those who would seek consolation in the service of God.

Religion is designed in its very nature to make us happy, and happiness is the great object of human pursuit. Why, then, should not the Christian be cheerful? Let no one for a moment entertain the idea, that one cannot be pious without appearing dejected and downcast. If there is an individual on earth who should be cheerful, it is the Christian. Then, "rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Her piety should be benevolent. By this is meant, that she should not only desire to be happy herself, but to make others so. She should not be content to "eat her morsel alone," but earnestly desire that others may come to "the Gospel feast," and partake of the rich and inexhaustible provi-

sions of Divine grace. She should cultivate those feelings which St. Paul had, when he exclaimed, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved." This will induce her to bear the cross, to speak well of the name of the Lord, and to reprove, exhort, and persuade, as circumstances require or opportunity is given.

Her tears, her prayers, her songs of praise, should all evince the benevolence of her spirit, and act as powerful persuasives to a life of spirit. With a benevolent piety, she will have some of the feelings of the blessed Saviour, who "went about doing good." She will act upon the principle, that having "freely received she should freely give." And in that case "giving will not impoverish, or withholding enrich" her.

Benevolent piety cannot be indifferent to the spiritual and eternal interests of others. And as she who possesses it beholds the great multitude "greedy of eternal pain," she will be constrained, on all proper occasions, to point them to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

She will embrace every opportunity to invite sinners to come to the Saviour, and will be saying to all about her, as did Moses to his kinsman, "Come and go with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel."

The females of the Church naturally look to the minister's wife as a standard of piety; and the tone of religion among that portion of the Church, will be in no small degree affected by her religious character. How important, then, that her piety should be such as constantly to promote a growth in grace among them! To stimulate to such a tone of piety, we have many illustrious examples of female piety given us in the Scriptures. The patriarchal age had its Sarah and Rachel; the times of the prophets present us with the names of Hannah, and Ruth, and Esther; and in the age of Christ and his apostles, we read with admiration the stories of the Marys, and Elizabeth, and Lydia, and Dorcas, and Lois, and Eunice. Nor do modern times fail to afford us illustrious examples of female piety. The wife of the sainted Fletcher, of Madeley,

was scarcely his inferior in the attainment of the mind of Christ; and what a brilliant constellation is that galaxy of female piety that constitutes the female correspondents of Mr. Wesley! In our own times the religious world has gazed with admiring wonder, at the missionary zeal of Mrs. Judson. Of others we may not speak, though the annals of the modern Church contain many an illustrious name. May these bright examples encourage and stimulate others, each in her own sphere, to "go and do likewise."

4. *The itinerant's wife should love the itinerancy.*

This qualification is not required of the wives of ministers of other denominations, who expect to "dwell among their own people," for many years in succession. But the wife of a Methodist itinerant minister must have it, or she cannot be happy in her work, nor useful to the Church. If destitute of this qualification, in a little time her duties must become intolerable, and her work and that of her husband be abandoned.

Dissatisfaction with the itinerancy, and

complaints against the workings of the system, by the wives of our ministers, cannot fail to disparage that essential element in our Church's economy, in the minds of our own people. The female associates of such dissatisfied ones will naturally sympathize with them, and from them will imbibe a spirit of disaffection to the institutions of the Church. There is reason to believe, that in some cases much harm has actually resulted from this cause; and though the authors of the mischief have not designed it, yet permanent prejudices against our Church have arisen from such disaffection on the part of the wives of itinerant Methodist ministers.

The itinerant's wife should manifest her love for the itinerancy in her words and actions on all proper occasions; and in this way she will be able to increase the attachment of our people to this essential feature of Methodism. Nothing would more certainly strengthen this principal wheel of our ecclesiastical machinery, which has for many years worked out such glorious results, than a hearty attachment to it on the

part of those upon whom its burdens press most heavily. As we love our cherished Methodism, and would watch over its interests, and labour to maintain it in all its original integrity, we should also love and cherish this right hand of its power. Our itinerancy is confessedly, like the hair of Samson, the secret place of the power of Methodism. May it never be said that the wives of our ministers have, like Delilah, through want of attachment to this great peculiarity, shorn the whole system of its strength.

“ See where the servant of the Lord,
A busy multitude, appear :
For Jesus day and night employed,
His heritage they toil to clear.

“ The love of Christ their hearts constrains,
And strengthens their unwearied hands ;
They spend their sweat, and blood, and pains,
To cultivate Immanuel's lands.”

CHAPTER II.

DUTIES OF THE ITINERANT'S WIFE.

WE all sustain important relations to each other, out of which arise certain corresponding obligations. None are so isolated as to be removed from these responsibilities, nor so insignificant that they do not apply to them. We were originally formed for action,—physical, intellectual, and moral action,—and God requires of us, in the established order of things, the proper exercise of the powers with which he has endowed us. Our present purpose must confine us to the application of this general truth to the complicated and somewhat peculiar duties of the wife of a Methodist itinerant minister.

Here we will first notice—

1. *Her duties to her husband.*

Having been set apart to “the office and work of the ministry,” he has need of both the direct help of grace, and all the adventitious helps that are providentially placed

within his reach. His wife should therefore, and especially, be his helper; as the relation she sustains to him and to his work and ministry are such as to demand duties from her which can be rendered by no other.

(1.) *It is her duty to pray much for her husband's success.*

To the truly pious wife of a minister, this duty will be as agreeable as it is right. She knows that the work is the Lord's, and that success in it can be insured only by his blessing; so that her zeal for the cause of God, and her interest in her husband's affairs, unite to prompt her to pray earnestly for the divine blessing upon his labours. While, therefore, the minister of Christ is engaged in preaching the word, or in others of the many departments of his ministry, his wife should follow him in all things, with earnest and faithful supplications for the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the fertilizing showers of grace to come down upon the seed sown. Thus, in the faithful discharge of this delightful duty, may she prove herself a true "help-mate" to her husband.

There are but few things that can so powerfully support and encourage the true minister of Christ, while endeavouring, apparently almost in vain, to persuade his fellow-men to become reconciled to God, as the recollection, that the sharer of his joys and sorrows follows the word he utters with earnest and faithful prayer for its success. Though the Church may practically refuse to co-operate with him, yet, thus supported, he knows he cannot wholly fail of success while it is written, that if "*two* of you shall agree to ask anything touching the kingdom of heaven, it shall be done unto you." There are now Methodist ministers actively prosecuting their work, who from weighty considerations would have retired from the itinerancy, and perhaps abandoned the work altogether, but for the support they have received from their praying companions, who have encouraged their hearts and strengthened their hands in the work committed to them. To render this assistance is, therefore, the plain duty of the wife of the itinerant. And while it affects him thus favourably, its influence reaches

also to those for whose benefit he labours. Prayer reaches that Being whose power is infinite, and who only can give efficiency and success to the preaching of the gospel. With what more efficient auxiliary could an itinerant minister go forth to his calling than a praying wife? How desolate must he be in that work, if she fail to render him such support!

(2.) *The itinerant's wife should encourage her husband with pious counsel.*

She, above all other persons, both from sharing some of them and closely observing others, knows what are the sorrows and conflicts that he is called to endure. In the hour of discouragement and despondency his heart seeks some sympathizing bosom to lean upon, and then it is that a faithful and discreet wife—one possessing the qualifications enumerated in a former chapter—becomes to him truly a “ministering angel.” When, at such times, her husband opens to her the burdens of his heart, his temptations and conflicts, it is hers by pious counsels to assuage his sorrows, and to cheer his spirit by assurances of consolation and support.

There is now in one of the New-England conferences a minister, who would long since have located, from a sense of his own incompetency for the work, but for the resolute and persevering counsel of his wife, urging him still to go forward. She believed it was his duty to preach the gospel, and was herself willing to follow wherever duty might call him, and to share with him the multiplied toils and privations incident to his calling. There was a power not easily resisted in her tears, and prayers, and words of kindness. With many misgivings he has continued to bear the cross, and thus far has found the grace of God sufficient for him.

In the same conference a minister located at the suggestion, or rather at the earnest entreaty of his wife. His own heart was in the work of the ministry, but she opposed his cherished purpose. She was dissatisfied with the appointments and the maintenance he received, and with the people among whom he was called to labour; and as little pleased with the frequent removals required by the itinerant system. He was

a minister of respectable talents, and of undoubted piety; but a worldly-minded wife plucked him from his orbit, and thus extinguished a light that God had set in his Church. He is now a secular man, immersed in worldly business, and doing comparatively little for the interests of religion.

Such is the power both for good and evil that is possessed by the wives of ministers. Though "in subjection" to their own husbands, it is still their right and their duty to give advice; but it should be done only with a godly jealousy for the interests of Christ's kingdom. Questions of personal or selfish interests; anxious thoughts as to "what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed," should not engross too much of her attention, nor occupy the most prominent place in her mind. She should also avoid all appearance of authority in giving her counsels, and especially should she guard against everything like an assumption of superiority. Her influence should be persuasive and not dictatorial; and though

to others her words may seem to be exceedingly feeble, yet upon the heart of her husband their effects cannot fail to be powerful. When his heart grows sad through discouragements in his work, she should never treat the subject as one of indifference to herself; rather, then, especially, she should, by making the cause her own, and giving her own shoulder to the burden, minister effectually to his relief. Then, more than at any other time, is there untold worth in a look of kindness, a cheerful smile, in a tear of sympathy, or a song of hope. Such sympathy is happily fitted to strengthen the faith, and to nerve to renewed action the sinking heart of the weary and desponding itinerant. Such are the important and weighty duties that devolve upon the companion and helper of the Methodist itinerant. Whoso findeth such a wife—one whose qualifications and inclinations of heart lead her to such duties—has, indeed, found of the Lord.

We will next consider—

2. *Her duties in the relation of a mother.*

MOTHER, is a magic word,—a name pre-

cious to every heart. To her who bears that name helpless infancy looks with unmingled confidence, as a guardian and provider. In the strength of manhood, when self-reliance has succeeded to the instincts of dependence, that name is still spoken with delight and sacred reverence. Among life's multiplied cares, a mother's love distils upon the soul as the gentle dews of evening. It lives in the memory, and is cherished in the hearts of the good, even down to old age. It never dies.

Time, which effaces every other impression, engraves more deeply the remembrance of a mother's care and faithfulness. The thoughtless youth may wander far from his native roof, and drink deeply from the impure streams of worldly pleasure; or, in later years, he may plunge into the vortex of business, forgetful of the claims of Heaven upon him; he may become distinguished in the conflicts and triumphs of the political arena; or he may wander beyond the trackless ocean to visit distant shores and unknown tribes; but in all these situations the remembrance of a mo-

ther's love and a mother's tears will follow him, to reprove him in his departure from duty, and to console him in the hour of his deepest distress.

In the formation of the character of the child—the future man—who else can exert an influence equal to that of a mother? Probably it will not be questioned that in most cases the child receives a bias of mind during his first twelve years, that pretty certainly determines his future character. During that period he receives a moral training, is partially educated in moral science; and the lessons thus learned will not be readily forgotten. The religious instruction then received will, in most cases, prove either “a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.” The character thus formed will be likely to continue, and to distinguish the individual, as good or bad, through subsequent life, and even extend in its consequences into the eternal world.

During this period the social nature is most active, and commonly assumes a form and character according to which the person becomes a pleasing and safe companion,

or an enemy to his race and a plague to his fellows. Then, likewise, the elements of knowledge are gained, and the foundation of the education of the intellect is laid. The seed then sown springs up in after life ; and in this, as in all other cases, the character of the harvest will be determined by that of the seed that is sown. It is during this period that the child learns, if at any time, the lesson of subjection, and bends his own stubborn will to the mandates of rightful authority. By thus learning to distinguish liberty from license, he becomes in after life a good and useful member of civil society. There have no doubt been instances that have not conformed to the rule above specified ; the rule however holds good, as a general rule, notwithstanding these apparent and, perhaps, real exceptions. It is now an unquestionable maxim of human wisdom, that education gives form and character to the minds upon which it operates ; and this should greatly encourage pious mothers to attend most carefully to those great interests during that interesting period, when their power is

paramount, and the mind most impressible. No promise is more positively announced in Scripture, than that, if a child be properly educated, his advanced age will be such as it should be. Let those who believe that declaration of the wise man, be encouraged to labour in hope, assured that "in due time they shall reap, if they faint not." It is the privilege of pious parents to entertain cheerful expectations as to the future character and lives of their children; and to confidently expect their prayers and instructions will not fail of their reward.

The writer of these pages was deprived of a pious mother in early life. Just as his mind was beginning to be developed, and the watch-care of affection and piety was most needed, she was cut down by disease, and removed from the objects of her earthly affections. But she was not wholly lost. Even now, though thirty years have passed away since her removal, the influence of that mother is still felt by her son. The recollection of the fact that he once had a praying mother, awakens in his heart a deep sense of obligation, and

kindles in his bosom a flame of joy and thankfulness. Whatever else he may forget, he can never forget that he is a child of many prayers. This thought will accompany him through life, and exert a saving influence on his future history. Though that mother has long since been dead, and no proud monument marks the spot where her dust reposes to tell the passers by "where they have laid her," yet her name is still dear to him upon whose head her hands were often laid while she offered for him her vows and supplications.

Not long since, a Methodist minister remarked in a conference love-feast, that "when he was a little child his mother dedicated him to God, to be a Christian and a Methodist minister." That mother has long been dead, but, doubtless, the influence of her faith and prayers is still manifesting itself in the piety and usefulness of her son. It is not improbable that in the day of judgment, when causes and effects will be clearly perceived, there will appear a multitude of redeemed spirits whose salva-

tion may be traced to the piety of that mother, as one of its instrumental causes. Ah, who can tell the extent of a mother's influence! What mind but the infinite can understand its multiplied secret forms, as well as manifest operations!

These remarks, though of a general character, are emphatically true when applied to the family of the itinerant minister. If any should ask, why the important duty of training young children is left so much to the mother, who must be also greatly oppressed with other duties, when it devolves equally upon the father, the answer in that case is not difficult. If he is a faithful minister of Christ, his heart and hands are fully occupied with that work. He is in his closet seeking in secret the grace that may be afterwards openly displayed in his ministry; or, he is in his study "searching the Scriptures," and pondering the great doctrines of revelation, that he may be able to "bring beaten oil into the sanctuary of the Lord." He has need to apply his time and energies to his holy work, that he may be "a workman that needeth not

to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Nor is preaching the word the whole duty of the faithful minister. He must also "visit from house to house," with tears and prayers, commending them to the grace of God, warning the careless, comforting the afflicted, and encouraging the desponding to cast their confidence on the Lord. The various departments of the affairs of the Church all demand his attention. He must meet the classes, attend the prayer-meetings, visit the sick, and bury the dead. He will often find occasions that require his interference and the interposition of his good offices, and, perhaps, of his authority likewise, to adjust existing differences among brethren, and to bring to agreement those who may be divided against each other—a most delicate and perplexing, but highly important work. Too often, also, he is compelled to devote much time and care to the financial interests of the Church, and to care for its temporal as well as its spiritual concerns.

The peculiar nature of the Methodist itinerancy often requires a minister to spend

much of his time away from home, when of necessity the whole direction of the household must devolve upon his wife. He thus becomes comparatively a stranger, or only an occasional visitor in his own family, while almost the entire care and government of the children, as well as their education, is given up to her. It may be, that in the fulness of their zeal for the house of God, some ministers have too far neglected their own families. It may, indeed, be doubted, whether any duties are more sacred than those which a man owes to his own household ; and whether it is any man's duty, even for the sake of preaching the gospel, to wholly neglect the intellectual and spiritual culture of his children, or to lay so great a burden upon the unsupported shoulders of his wife. But with all that he may do to divide with her the burden of life, it must still be plain, that the education of a Methodist minister's children, is emphatically a mother's work.

The difficulties of the work in question are greatly increased by the circumstances of the itinerancy itself. At the expiration

of every two years, or more frequently, there must be a change of residence, and, of course, a change in the associates of the children—a state of things that often operates most unfavourably upon their manners and characters. Every locality presents some new attraction, something novel or interesting to the youthful mind. A curiosity to witness whatever may be going forward in the neighbourhood is thus engendered, which can be gratified only at the extreme peril of their morals. But if wholly restrained in these desires, there will be danger of their becoming objects of contempt and malice, and possibly insubordination may arise among the itinerant's children, and passing beyond parental control, they may become hopelessly ruined. If a medium course is adopted,—which certainly is the only safe one,—and their associates carefully selected, that discrimination will be made the occasion of offence, when it is seen that the children of some families are preferred to those of others. Many people seem to think that the minister's family is a kind of common property of the

society, and that he has no right to govern his own children as he judges to be best for them. As the mother must be in a great measure the chief agent in such affairs, she especially will be censured as high-minded or partial in her intercourse with the people, to her own sorrow, and often to the prejudice of her husband's usefulness.

To direct and superintend the selection of associates for her children, is one of the most difficult of such a mother's duties. She is aware, that the community expects more of her children than of those of her neighbours. Their words and actions are carefully watched. That which would be passed by unnoticed in other children, or accounted mere childishness, is magnified into a *crime* if found in the children of a Methodist minister. For this reason, we apprehend, it is so often said, that "ministers' children are worse than those of other people;" and not because they really are so. There are also depraved persons in the community, who delight to draw such children into sin, that they may have an opportunity of proclaiming it upon "the house-top," or of exulting

in the harm they have done to the minister of religion.

Parties of pleasure, which receive the countenance and support of some members of the Christian Church, and which are often attended by children of religious parents, are nearly always evil in their tendencies. Ministers' children are sometimes invited to these parties; and in many instances it is no easy thing to prevent their occasional or even frequent attendance upon them, without producing in their minds the conviction that "they are too closely restrained."

If they are allowed to attend these parties, some will approve and others will condemn the course. If they are prohibited, the community will be no better satisfied, though, doubtless, their own interests would be better subserved. Under such circumstances it is no easy thing to "train up a child in the way he should go," though persevering efforts must still be made. Here the mother is taxed to her utmost. She must give "line upon line, and precept upon precept;" and day and night

make vigorous exertions to guide their feet in the path of virtue and piety.

In this work she will find occasion for all her discretion, intelligence, and piety ; nor may she abate her efforts till called to her reward, or otherwise separated from her children. The mother who rightly performs these duties is a blessing to society, and will come down to her grave crowned with honours ; while she who permits her children to grow up without culture and restraint, is raising up a posterity to curse the world.

But notwithstanding the untiring efforts of pious mothers, there are cases of apparent failure as to the desired result. Such failures are the effects of the natural depravity of the human heart, and the vitiated state of society. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked ;" and this depravity of spirit, unhappily, is often of early and precocious development, while society abounds with influences that tend to give it a gigantic growth. Let those who complain, because the itinerant's wife succeeds so poorly in

governing her children, consider well the difficulties with which she is compelled to struggle ; and especially if they are of those whose children "live as they list," let them be shamed into silence.

3. *Her duties as a member of the Church.*

The wife of an itinerant minister is an individual Christian, as well as those in more private relations, though her duties as such are somewhat modified by her peculiar circumstances. In addition to the duties required of Christian females generally, many others are expected of her. In some cases probably too much is expected of her. Some persons are unquestionably unjust in their expectations, and sometimes even severe in their exactions. They expect the minister's wife to be more than human, and then they would bind upon her "burdens grievous to be borne," which they would not touch, to lighten, "with one of their fingers." But apart from these unfair requirements, it may be still affirmed that the religious duties of the wife of an itinerant minister are many and peculiar.

She will be expected to be more punctual in attending the public and social means of grace than other females of the Church ; nor would the same apologies for absence that fully excuse others avail for her, should she seem to be delinquent. Her interest in the cause of religion, and her personal love of the house of God, may suffice wherever it is practicable to draw her to the sanctuary ; but in addition to these motives, she must be diligent in these things for her example's sake. Her piety must, as far as consistent with Christian duty, accommodate itself to the tastes and expectations of the Church. However much or little others may do, it is expected that the minister's wife will be foremost in every good work. She must visit the sick, bestowing upon them very special attention, as nothing can atone for neglect in this particular ; and in doing this she must pass by deserts, and consider only necessities. It will also be expected that she will often accompany her husband in his pastoral visits, that she will go far and near, visit frequently, and remain a long time. With

this kind of intercourse with the people there are sometimes very unpleasant associations. Some will take the opportunity thus given to complain of past neglects—that they have not been visited sooner, or that these attentions are so unfrequently given. The poor will sometimes intimate that their poverty is the cause of their being neglected, though perhaps those very persons have received more than an average share of attention. Delinquent Church-members will ascribe the pretended neglect to their neglect of religious duties, and their stinted contributions for the support of the ministry; thus making others responsible for the uneasiness given them by their own consciences. Thus the intercourse of the pastor and his wife with certain classes of the Church and society, is little more than a painful and profitless hearing of complaints of imaginary grievances. Such visits must be anything but agreeable to the minister's wife, nor can they be in any considerable degree profitable to those to whom they are made.

In addition to these duties of the itine-

rant's wife to the interests of the Church, her own domestic duties must necessarily engage much of her time and attention. This seems to be quite forgotten, or overlooked, in too many cases. Instead of having these duties taken away by her relations to society, they are often greatly augmented by those circumstances. The truly pious and discreet wife and mother cannot neglect the duties that she owes to her own family, as such a course would be wrong in itself, and also greatly prejudicial to her husband's usefulness in his ministry. She will therefore resolve, that whatever else shall be left undone, her duties to her family shall command her first attention. Her home is with her a sacred spot, and the duties of the wife and the mother are esteemed of no secondary importance. These she will perform with a conscientious fidelity, though, to do so, she is sometimes compelled to put forth efforts beyond her ability, and to labour and suffer in most discouraging circumstances. Did the pecuniary circumstances of the family justify it she might employ "help," but in many

cases that may not be, and so she is compelled to occupy the place of Martha, in caring for the imperious wants of her own household.

This picture should not be regarded as overdrawn, nor the opinions expressed esteemed merely imaginary. . "We speak the things that we do know," and if none besides will do it, the wives of many Methodist ministers will "receive our witness." This, indeed, is not intended as alike applicable to all places: there are, we grant, among us Churches that give an ample maintenance to their ministers, and provide well for the wants of their families; there are, also, other cases that will more than justify the above observations.

If it should be asked in reply, Do not other females labour diligently, and suffer many inconveniences in life, as well as the wives of itinerant ministers? we grant that doubtless many do; but there is nevertheless a difference. They endure whatever may be the portion assigned them from necessity; her trials are voluntarily assumed by her for the sake of the gospel. In ordi-

nary cases obscurity and retirement from the gaze of the world is the privilege of toiling poverty ; not so with her, however. She must endure the hardships and privations of the poor, but is denied their exemptions and immunities. While, therefore, we would sympathize with the itinerant, and from personal experience acknowledge that his labours are truly burdensome, we are still constrained to confess that his companion deserves a yet deeper sympathy. Though styled "the weaker vessel," her task is by no means proportionably light and easy to be borne. She is the servant of the Church in an eminent, and frequently in a humiliating sense, though some may regard her as specially favoured by her position in society.

These are some of the many onerous duties imposed on the itinerant's wife by the place she occupies, and by the circumstances and views of those among whom her lot is cast. It is not, however, presumed that half of the reality has been told in the foregoing pages. To enable her rightly to discharge these duties, she needs much of

the assistance of grace, the strength of a clear and active faith, and the cheering influence of a hope full of immortality. By these, like her blessed Master, she will be enabled to "endure the cross, despising the shame," till permitted to sit down with Him in his kingdom.

When pain o'er my weak flesh prevails,
With lamb-like patience arm my breast ;
When grief my wounded soul assails,
In lowly meekness may I rest.

Close to thy side still may I keep,
Howe'er life's various currents flow ;
With steadfast eye mark every step,
And follow thee where'er thou go.

So when on Sion thou shalt stand,
And all heaven's hosts adore their king,
Shall I be found at thy right hand,
And free from pain thy glories sing.

CHAPTER III.

TRIALS OF THE ITINERANT'S WIFE.

CAN the wife of a minister, whose whole time is occupied with duties relating to the interests of religion, and acting in concert with the divine mind for the salvation of souls,—can one so situated have trials? Some may think not, but the better-informed know that she often suffers severe afflictions of both a public and private character. The common causes of sorrow are found in the circumstances of a minister's wife, as well as in those of other pious females; while there are others that are peculiar to her condition. As her positions in society are peculiar, so are her trials; and as she occupies a position somewhat conspicuous, she becomes peculiarly the mark for the darts of the adversary. In specifying some of the trials peculiar to an itinerant's wife, we begin with,—

1. *Trials arising from the itinerancy.*

The system of an itinerant ministry, ori-

ginally adopted by the founder of Methodism, and religiously maintained by the large and growing denomination of Christians that acknowledge him as their father in the gospel, is by them believed to be most admirably adapted to meet the moral and religious wants of a perishing world. That it has carried the gospel to multitudes, who otherwise would have lived and died without it, is unquestionable; and the happy results of the gospel thus disseminated, are proclaimed by men and angels. This system does not wait for the sinner to seek for the gospel, nor stipulate to give a specific amount of ministerial service, for a definite remuneration; it carries the message of salvation to those who ask not for it, and demands of the sinner immediate submission to its claims. It is eminently aggressive, making war against the kingdom of Satan, and seeking its complete destruction. It leaves the enemy no place of retreat, nor does it contemplate any cessation of its warfare, till "the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess it forever, even forever and ever."

In its practical operations this plan has produced, and still is producing, the most glorious results; "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, *to the poor the gospel is preached.*" It is the special glory of the Methodist itinerancy, that it gives the gospel to the poor and despised of the earth, and raises to the privileges of Christian freemen the abject slaves of sin and Satan. Through its agency the gospel has become "the power of God unto salvation" to thousands who were once dead in sin, but are now rejoicing in the way that leads to everlasting life. These blessed results, however, are not effected without many and great sacrifices, of which those that are required of the itinerant's wife are not the least. To endure the trials thus imposed she needs a large measure of the sustaining grace of God.

Let us for a moment contemplate the scene, when first the pious female unites her interests with those of the young itinerant, and goes forth from the parental habitation, and all the endearment of *home*.

To her every little locality and trivial object about that sacred spot is full of interest. The school-house where she sported in childhood,—the church where she first plighted her vows to her God, and where she has since often rejoiced to mingle with the worshippers in acts of solemn devotion,—the grave-yard where repose the dust of the beloved ones, are now to be abandoned, perhaps forever. She has become the wife of one whose duty calls him, to go forth “to seek the wandering souls of men.” She does not, indeed, quit these objects so much endeared to her heart, to possess a mansion prepared for her reception; she has not united her fortunes to those of a man of wealth and worldly expectations; a purer and nobler passion has directed her in these important matters, and now sustains her as she turns her back upon her much-loved home.

She goes forth on an errand of mercy, to spend her days in doing good, rather than in the pursuit of selfish or worldly enjoyments. She is not going to “settle with a people,” with whom she will dwell for many

years, so permanently fixed that her house-affairs may be arranged as for a long continuance. Were it so, she might adorn her humble dwelling agreeably to her tastes, and spread the charms of a modest elegance about her dwelling-place; but even this is denied her. Her husband is not "settled for life," nor is it expected that he will remain in his present situation as long as the people will endure him, or till he can obtain a more eligible place. In the simple fact that she is always unsettled, it is easily perceived that she is cut off from many valuable sources of enjoyment. But temporal enjoyment, however innocent, is not the object for which she lives. She is a pilgrim, a traveller to a better country, and she holds herself ready, literally, to remove at any time when "the powers that be" require it. She has in heart and in life cut loose from worldly entanglements, and is afloat upon life's troubled waters. But Christ is with her, and he will calm the tempest and bring her to her rest.

Thus she goes forth to her appointed place, and is soon happily occupied with the

great work to which her life is consecrated. New acquaintances are now made, which, under the influence of Christian sympathies, quickly grow into strong attachments; but soon she must break off from these associations, and go elsewhere. She had, indeed, but faintly imagined how painful would be her parting with friends she had found in this her first "appointment." She had laboured with them in the affairs of the Church, and for the salvation of souls; but the time of parting has come, and she must move. Her husband's services are required elsewhere, and she cheerfully submits to the authority of the superintendency. Another is to occupy his place, to labour as he has done, in the hope that a class of persons to whom his ministry has not been best adapted, may be reached and profited by his successor. As many years of experience have fully proved the great utility of a change of gifts in the ministry, the itinerant's wife cheerfully submits to the burdens it imposes, that she may contribute something to the cause of her Divine Master. Having given herself to the itine-

rancy from motives of piety, she now cheerfully endures the toils and trials incident to it. She loves her friends as ardently as do others, and keenly feels the pain of parting from them; but for the sake of Christ and his cause she can forsake them all.

Those who have had no experience in these things can but poorly appreciate the trials they impose; nor are they prepared to sympathize with the embarrassments of the itinerant's wife. This view of the case, however, does not so militate against the itinerant system—as some suppose—as to constitute a sufficient reason why it should be given up by the Church. Few, besides disappointed and disaffected spirits, will take this view of the subject. The Church does not propose to accomplish so great a work as the salvation of the world, without efforts and sacrifices bearing some proportion to the vastness of the enterprise. It is very generally found to be the case, that where much is undertaken for the sake of the gospel, great sacrifices are demanded, and the success is, for the most part, in about the same proportion. If the great

end of the itinerancy were to make provisions for ministers and their families, it surely ought to be immediately abandoned as a complete failure; but if its chief design is "to spread Scriptural holiness," and call sinners to repentance, it surely ought to be preserved and cherished, as it is evidently, and to an eminent degree, accomplishing that purpose.

We will now contemplate the itinerant's wife, as she comes to her newly-appointed place. The greetings she receives differ widely in different cases. That we may more forcibly exhibit the dark side of the picture, we will first present the bright side, that we may gain the advantage of the contrast. The minister's family, for whose removal proper arrangements have been made, are met on their arrival at the place assigned them by warm-hearted Christian friends, some of whom conduct them to the hospitable residence of some member of the Church, where cheerful smiles and words of Christian sympathy quickly dispel the clouds of sorrow that the experience of a few days had cast over the spirits of the

itinerant's wife. She now feels that she is among friends; and at the close of that day, whose morning was one of anxious concern, she pillows her head in peace, thanking God for the mercies thus far afforded, and encouraged to trust him for all coming time and events. Soon her own dwelling, made ready by the kind attention of her new friends, invites her to enjoy its simple comforts. Here new associates in Church-fellowship gather around her, to minister to her wants, and to anticipate every cause of inconvenience, while thus an intimate personal acquaintance is formed, that rapidly matures into a warm and heart-felt personal attachment. Everybody is interested in the new minister and his family; the formality of introductions is dispensed with, so that a short time suffices to complete the round of acquaintances, and to enable the wife of the minister to go out and in among the people, doing and receiving good.

This is the picture of things as they should be, and we are happy to be able to add, as in many cases they are in fact; but

there are, also, not a few exceptions to this good rule. Look now upon another picture, drawn as faithfully from nature as the preceding, and in it see a forcible exhibition of the "trials of the itinerant's wife." After a wearisome journey she arrives at the place prepared for the residence of the coming minister, (if, indeed, any place has been provided, which is not always the case,) depressed in spirit and exhausted with labour. The house just vacated by the predecessor, is found as it was left in the hurried departure of the former occupants, of course greatly needing to be thoroughly "swept and garnished,"—a work that should have been done by the stewards of the Church, in the brief interval between the departure of the family of the former incumbent and the arrival of the new one. Here she must begin to "set in order the things that are to be set in order," in which, if unassisted, she is not always unobserved by the idle and inquisitive of the neighbourhood. Several weeks must pass before she can even begin her acquaintance with the sisters in the Church, who,

instead of coming to her aid, and rendering her the assistance that she so much needs, and which would be so highly appreciated, are occupied with their own interests, and expect her to come to them, rather than they go to her. There is no rallying around her as she arrives at her new home; no earnest efforts to make her feel that she is among friends, who sympathize with all her sorrows, and are ever ready to lessen the burdens that necessarily fall upon her. Perhaps, after it is presumed that she is "settled," some few will give her very ceremonious "calls," make a few inquiries about her affairs, and pass some general compliments, by way of beginning an acquaintance with the minister's family. Now, all this is not to be set down as the result of a criminal indifference to the welfare of the itinerant's wife; it is rather the result of thoughtlessness, and a want of that genuine benevolence that is congenial to a cultivated mind, and which true piety always tends to inspire in the heart. Such persons often possess many excellences of character; at any rate, they need to have

the gospel preached among them, and thither the itinerant and his family must go "to minister and not to be ministered to."

Notwithstanding the unpropitious aspect of things at the beginning, the faithful wife of the itinerant at length breaks through the opposing difficulties, and becomes engaged and interested in the affairs of the society. She even becomes warmly attached to some whom she finds in that society, with whom she takes sweet counsel, and learns to appreciate their genuine but unostentatious piety, though not accompanied with the embellishments of worldly refinement. She learns that there is often much that is really excellent beneath a very unpromising exterior. But soon the parting season comes round again, when she must "pack up and move." Thus her life passes away—her career is that of a pilgrim and a stranger, having no continuing city, from the time she leaves her paternal abode till she enters upon her final rest. The itinerancy allows no protracted respites; nor is there any escape from its demands, except by quitting its ranks. But to the

faithful itinerant's wife no thought is so abhorrent as that of a *location*. She desires to *locate* only in the New Jerusalem, where she may occupy one of those "many mansions" which the Saviour has gone to prepare for those who "take up their cross and follow him."

2. *Trials arising from the mixed state of society.*

Among the trials endured by those who are occupied in the ministry of the gospel, none are more painful than those occasioned by want of fidelity in professed Christians; take away this source of affliction, and the trials of the itinerant's wife would be greatly diminished. But these things are ever occurring, and they must be endured. And not only the positively-wicked, but oftentimes good-meaning persons contribute greatly to these evils.

There are frequently found persons in the Church who, through infirmity, want of judgment, or lack of deep piety, become sore annoyances to the minister's wife. No crime is alleged against them, and they must be retained in the Church, though the

chief practical effect of their connexion with the Church is to afford them an increased ability to do harm. This evil seems to be so hedged in that it cannot be removed; it only remains, that they who suffer it should "let patience have her perfect work," and "endure all things for the elect's sake."

A few years ago the wife of a young minister, while upon her first circuit, was greatly afflicted with a brother H., whom she believed to be using his influence against her husband's usefulness and the interests of religion. She, therefore, looked forward with hope to the time when they should remove from that circuit, and so escape from his annoyances. She has been on a number of circuits and stations since, and has learned more of human nature and of the composition of society, and she now declares that she has found a brother H. wherever she has gone. This item of experience has nothing unusual about it—the wives of many other travelling ministers can testify to the truthfulness of the things intended to be illustrated.

There are in almost every place persons

who seem to delight to speak unfavourably of their former pastors, nor do their wives always escape these censures. This minister was too old, or too young ; that, too penurious, or too prodigal ; another was too reserved, or too communicative. In conducting public worship, some were too stiff and formal, others too ardent and undignified. In dress and personal appearance, some were too careless, and others over nice, or even foppish. In the duties of the pulpit, one preached too long, and another's sermons had nothing in them ; this man spoke too loud, and that one was hardly audible ; the discourses of some were too doctrinal, of others too practical ; the remarks of one were often so direct as to appear personal, of another so general as to mean nothing. This one visited too little, and that one was always going from place to place when he would have been better employed in his study. One minister is complained of for being too obtrusive with his religious conversations ; and another, that he seldom introduced the subject in private. All these various complaints may be heard in the in-

tercourse of a minister with his people, and more especially by his wife, with whom greater freedom is used ; and while listening to such not very edifying strictures, she may also reflect that soon her own husband's case will be added to all the rest, and all his defects, real or imaginary, will be proclaimed and magnified by these practised fault-finders. In many cases there is no immediate remedy for this great evil. The subject cannot, in most cases, be made a matter of Church discipline, " lest, while you gather up the tares, you root up the wheat also." It must, therefore, be endured till cured by teaching a better use of the " unruly member ;" and in the meantime the sufferers must submit patiently to their destiny, and learn, as far as possible, to profit by the folly and mischievous conduct of others. If there be anywhere a place and a society to which these remarks are wholly inapplicable, in which there is no *railer*, happy is that people, and happy the minister, and especially the minister's wife that dwells among them.

There is another class of people popularly

styled "newsmongers." It is not their business to rail, or even to express an opinion with reference to the minister or any of his family, nor to them of the members of the Church. Indeed, they will assume no responsibility, nor do they profess even to *think* evil of any one. They simply tell whatever they have heard, without reference to its truth or falsehood, or the consequences which may follow from telling it. They are always supplied with news, and have ample time to spread it through the community. They may have heard that some are dissatisfied with the preacher; that they object to his talents, his adaptation to the place, his manner of communicating, or something of a similar character. They then have no peace until they "free their troubled minds." Perhaps they have not the boldness to go to the preacher himself, though painfully anxious that he should know it; so they go to his wife and deposit the news with her. Thus, by the folly, ignorance, and depravity of others, her peace is often interrupted, and clouds obscure the sun of her enjoyment.

In some communities there are deceitful persons, who are the occasion of great trial to the itinerant's wife. At first, they profess to be great friends to the preacher's family, and would seem to be ready "to pluck out their eyes," if it were possible, to promote their happiness. In the preacher's success they appear to rejoice, and to sympathize in all his afflictions and sorrows. But at length, without any assignable cause to justify the change, these professed friends are changed into enemies, and, perhaps, a fire is kindled that many waters cannot quench. And what is worst of all, this iniquity is frequently perpetrated under the semblance of great sanctity, and with high religious pretensions. In some cases the truth itself is so perverted by a malicious ingenuity, as to become more a lie than the truth, and the language of unsuspecting confidence is first dissevered from its qualifying connexions, and then "proclaimed upon the house-top." Many an itinerant's wife has experienced these "perils from false brethren," and, unhappily, from false sisters too; every Christian grace is then

demanded to keep the soul in patience, and only divine grace is then sufficient to save.

The foregoing remarks relative to the persons that occasion so many and severe trials to the itinerant's wife, will apply to only a small portion of the members of the Church in any place. The writer rejoices in the conviction, that the great mass of the Church are honest and sincere in their Christian profession. They are also strongly attached to our itinerancy, and they have learned to sympathize with the peculiar trials of the minister's wife, and they delight as far as possible to lighten her burdens, and to smooth the asperities of her path in life. Many of her sorrows are, however, her own, in such a sense that they cannot be devolved upon another,—she must bear them herself, and alone, but not without the aid of Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for you."

3. *Trials arising from penuriousness in the Church.*

A minister's family have bodies as well as souls, though some persons seem to over-

look that fact; and because they have bodies, they require the things that pertain to the body. They, indeed, have need of the spiritual manna "that cometh down from God out of heaven" for their souls; they also require "the meat that perisheth" for their bodies. They must have the "white robes" which "are the righteousness of saints," for their spiritual adorning; they need, also, "garments that wax old," for the covering of their bodies. They can, indeed, for their souls' sustenance and comfort, "buy wine and milk without money and without price," but their bodies require to be fed with that for which "money" is given, and which cannot be obtained except for a "price." These things, which everybody knows, if they are but thought of, should suggest to all concerned, the possibility that the trials incident to the itinerant life are sometimes augmented by pecuniary embarrassments.

Most of our readers have probably heard of the man who, in a love-feast, thanked God for a *free* salvation, and added, that though he had been a Methodist more than twenty

years, it had cost him less than *one dollar*. He was only one of a class that is quite too numerous in some places, either for the good of the Church or the comfort of the minister and his family. The response made by the minister to the person above spoken of, "Lord, bless your *stingy* soul," contained, though a severe, only a just rebuke.

Such individuals must always be of very little service to the Church, and but for the good the Church may do them, in spite of the narrowness of their souls, they might as well be out of it. It is to be lamented that the notion has obtained a position in certain localities, that a chief excellence of Methodism is its cheapness; and that men whose intelligence and shrewdness in business-matters forbid the inference that they believe so, have nevertheless proceeded on the assumption that a minister's family could be maintained for an amount utterly insufficient, though used with the most rigid economy. In consequence of this there have been not a few instances in which the families of Methodist ministers have

been reduced to painfully-narrow circumstances, and their most common wants but scantily supplied. These embarrassments necessarily fall most heavily upon the itinerant's wife ; and not unfrequently when her afflictions become known, they are charged to her own want of economy and good management. She must try to keep up the appearance of comfort and respectability in her house, her table, and in the personal apparel of the family, though she have very little furniture, an unfurnished larder, and a scantily-supplied wardrobe. The sums allowed for the support of the families of ministers are often almost a burlesque upon the very name of "support," and yet the amount actually given is often much less ; and this often occurs in the midst of a community amply able to provide liberally for the wants of one having an equitable claim upon them.

But the itinerant's wife, however sensible of the difficulties of her case, cannot complain of her husband while he is faithfully prosecuting his calling. He has given himself to the Church,—whose law on this subject

is, "the labourer is worthy of his hire,"—and the Church is virtually pledged to see to his temporal wants; and according to the temporal economy of the Methodist itinerancy, this duty is devolved upon the Churches among whom the ministers severally are occupied. It is a breach of faith on the part of such Churches, to fail in this duty when they have the power to perform it; and in this business a heavy responsibility, not without some shades of guilt, lies upon many of the stewards of our circuits and stations.

As a minister of Christ, the Methodist itinerant feels that the spirit of his calling forbids him to "leave the word of God to serve tables." That would, of course, be a practical abandonment of his ministry,—an infraction of his covenant made with the Church, when set apart to his holy work. He feels, also, that the vows of God are upon him, and can say with the apostle, that "necessity is laid upon me,—yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel." He is, indeed, sometimes tempted to return to his secular occupation, whence the Holy Spirit

called him to the ministry, when he feels the severe pressure of poverty upon his family, and sees that the Church has failed to fulfil its part of the covenant with him. But he has vowed to his God, and he knows that he is faithful, and will surely fulfil all that he has promised. He therefore holds out, though poverty and affliction meet him at every turn.

While many of our people are as liberal as their circumstances will warrant, and, perhaps, do as much for the support of the gospel as God requires at their hands, there are others, who are blessed with *plenty*, and enjoy the luxuries of life, who rarely think of him who ministers at the altar of God, and the family which is near and dear to his heart; or all their care is to see *how little* they can do, and still maintain a respectable place in the community, and retain their standing in the Church. We do not say such individuals will not reach heaven; but, if they do, "there will be a heaven above them," for the benevolent, the noble-hearted in the Church of God: "For as one star differeth from another

star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead."

We have spoken somewhat plainly of the penurious spirit that curses the Church in some places. Our remarks, however, will only apply, even in such places, to a minority of the membership. A majority of the Church keep a benevolent eye upon the interests of our Zion; and many are ready to "give as the Lord hath prospered them." This is an encouraging omen; and we can but hope that the time is not far distant, when all who have enrolled themselves among the people of God will possess more of the spirit of liberality, when they shall be baptized more copiously with the spirit of the Redeemer, whose benevolence is *infinite*. Then, as they have freely received they will freely give, and will gladly confess that the labourer in spiritual things may justly demand a competence of their temporal things.

Among all the trials endured by the itinerant's wife, few are so severe as those arising from the fear of want in case of sickness or misfortune. It may be answered,

that this is unnecessary, and that a Christian should never be troubled in regard to the future. It is much easier to preach this doctrine in the midst of present and prospective plenty, than from the vale of poverty to look forward to probable and not remote actual want and suffering without trembling. When, with the strictest economy, the expenses of the family are barely met by the annual receipts—when a great effort has to be made at the close of each year to “leave the circuit clear of debt”—when the preacher is obliged to sell his horse, and perhaps his library,—it is by no means strange that his wife feels some concern as to the future.

A minister's wife is a human being, nor does religion annihilate her sympathy for her family, or her desire to see their temporal wants supplied. Yet there are families of members of every conference, which would be reduced to actual *want* by a few months' sickness of the preacher, attended with the necessary increase of expenses, especially should his *claim* be withheld, as is sometimes done, (with shame we say it!)

while he is unable to perform the duties of his office. The wife is aware of this fact, and when she considers it, in connexion with his failing health, and the growing wants of her family, truly it is a source of trial.

4. *Trials arising from unreasonable expectations.*

Some very good people seem to forget that ministers and ministers' wives have the common infirmities and imperfections of our fallen human nature, and accordingly they require of them a course of action such as can only be expected of beings of infallible judgment and wholly above the influence of temptation. Actions that in other people would pass unnoticed, become the subjects of interested and often uncharitable criticism, if done by a minister, or by any of his family; and it is generally found to be the case among the class of persons now referred to, that it is more difficult for the minister's wife to give satisfaction, than for the minister himself. One is complained of for being too melancholy, —they do not like such pharisaical appearances; another is too buoyant and cheerful,

—she is just like other people! This one has an unusual fashion for her apparel,—she is unfit for good society; another dresses too fashionably,—she could not be distinguished from other females. One is prodigal, another penurious; this one is never at home, and that is never among the people. Not unfrequently her censors are themselves indulging in the very things which they condemn in her. Her liberty in lawful things is invaded by these usurpers, and her heart lacerated by those who should comfort and support her. Such people confound their own very imperfect notions of propriety with religious duty, and condemn as wicked whatever is not agreeable to their tastes. It is cause of devout gratitude that the reign of the tyranny of this class of persons is rapidly declining, and we may hope will soon cease forever. The Lord hasten it in his own good time!

To present the itinerant's wife fairly before the public, we have been under the necessity of looking upon the dark side of the picture. We have spoken somewhat plainly and pointedly. We are fully con-

vinced, that there are many, *very many*, who can testify, from actual experience, to the truth of what we have written. We would have remained silent on this subject, but that we are deeply sensible that the services of the wives of itinerants are not duly appreciated and rewarded.

Their peculiar position in society, together with a characteristic modesty, have silenced them upon this subject. Rarely is their voice heard in their own behalf. Those who refer to them in our weekly periodicals do not sufficiently regard their feelings, or avoid that species of fault-finding which characterizes the present generation. If these writers are not living in "single blessedness," they are certainly deserving no better state. For he who passes over the virtuous traits of character in the wife of a Methodist minister, who hastens to detect and expose her real or imaginary faults, does not merit the tender sympathy, the complaisant smile, and the cheerful co-operation of a praying wife.

CHAPTER IV.

REWARD OF THE ITINERANT'S WIFE.

"SURELY there is a reward for the righteous." "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Such is the blessed economy of divine grace, that if "even a cup of cold water" is given "in the name of a disciple," the reward is certain. Acts of kindness shown to the people of God as such, are reckoned by Christ as if they were shown to himself; "For inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Thus has our Lord taken care for those who "take up the cross and follow him."

These promises and provisions apply directly, and with great fitness, to the case of the wife of an itinerant Methodist minister. She has "forsaken all" for Christ's sake and the gospel's, and, therefore, to her belongs the promise of "a hundred-fold in

this world, and in the world to come life everlasting." She "goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed; she will doubtless return again rejoicing, bearing her sheaves with her:" or, to speak without a figure, she has done her duty to her family, the Church, and the world, from motives of piety; she has meekly suffered the trials incidental to the itinerancy; she has had foretastes of "the joy that is set before her;" and now, as she verges down to the grave, her heart is inflamed with "a hope full of immortality."

During the time of her sufferings and labours, while dwelling in tabernacles in the wilderness, the language of her heart was, "for me to live is Christ, but to die is gain." Then in the furnace of affliction her heart was refined by grace, and she was fitted for the society of the blessed above; now her Saviour is about to receive her to himself, and present her blameless before the Father. Gradually she has risen above the obstructions of this world, till at last she has gained the heights of Pisgah, whence she views by faith the land of promise,—

"A land of corn, and wine, and oil,
Favour'd with God's peculiar smile,
With every blessing blest ;
There dwells the Lord our Righteousness,
And keeps his own in perfect peace,
And everlasting rest."

But to be more specific, we will give somewhat in detail, an enumeration of the particulars of the rewards of the itinerant's wife.

1. *She enjoys much of "the fellowship of the saints."*

In her intercourse with her Christian associates in every place, she finds friends who appreciate her devotion to the cause of God, who confide in her piety, and delight to cheer her in her pilgrimage. But for the itinerancy, by which she is brought into communication with these godly ones, these privileges could not be enjoyed by her on earth ; and she can almost "glory in tribulation also," when such are some of its incidental results. At the close of life, as she looks back over her past experience, she sees that she has found fathers, and mothers, and brothers, and sisters, and sons, and daughters in the Lord, whose sympa-

thies she has shared, and by whose prayers she has been upheld. By them she has been watched over in kindness, and all her life and character viewed through the medium of Christian love, by which her infirmities have been diminished and her virtues magnified and made prominent in their sight. They have loved her with that pure, elevated, and Christian affection, that none but the "pure in heart" can duly appreciate, and in their society she has often felt, with the psalmist, to testify to the Lord,—
"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over."

2. *She is rewarded with the consciousness of being in the way of her duty.*

Her position in life is a peculiar one, and the duties it imposes are both many and difficult. Her husband occupies a conspicuous and very responsible place in the little circle of which he must necessarily be the centre, and the duties thus imposed on him render it very desirable that every possible assistance should be afforded him, and for many things he can look only to his wife.

She can best encourage his heart, and hold up his hands, when he is ready to faint under his burdens. She only, by her smiles, and words of love, and a thousand nameless attentions, can render his home a delightful refuge from the cares and perplexities of life, the unfaithfulness and the caprices of those with whom he is brought into contact. While in all these things she is true to the calls of duty, "that the gospel be not hindered," she enjoys the consolations of an approving conscience—a sense of having done her duty in her highly-responsible situation. She is to him a "true yoke-fellow in the gospel," and rejoices that she may be such; and if called to go before her companion into the land of spirits, though stung with the pain of parting for a season, an approving conscience softens the dying pillow, and tranquillizes her spirit in the hour of death.

Her children, too, demand her care, and in serving them she is likewise rewarded with an approving conscience. These duties pertain to her in common with all others who sustain the important relations of a

mother; but with her they are rendered peculiarly complicated and full of interest by her position in society. In helpless infancy she watches over them with a mother's care and affection, and with a solicitude for their welfare that increases with advancing years. In sickness and in health her eye is ever over them for good. In early childhood she consecrates them to God in holy baptism, and by daily prayer she renews the consecration thus solemnly made. Her soul rests in the divine assurance, that "the promise is to us *and to our children.*" With the quickness of a mother's eye she watches the unfolding intellects, and superintends their early education. Nor does she labour in vain: "Her children rise up and call her blessed." The Holy Spirit seconds her feeble efforts, and in many instances they are made early to partake of the blessings of salvation. In not a few instances the itinerant's wife has been called to give her own sons to follow the example of their father, in the work of the ministry, or her daughters to follow hers, in giving themselves to divide the sorrows and mul-

tiply the joys of some youthful herald of salvation; and though she best knows the load of responsibilities that now must fall upon them, she rejoices more in their calling than if they were exalted to the high places of wealth and worldly dignities. And as she comes down to old age or to death, she feels that she does not leave them in the wilderness of sin, to be "driven away in their wickedness," but safely enclosed in the fold of the great Shepherd, who will cause them to "go out and in, and find pasture." With such results already accomplished, and such glorious rewards in anticipation for her children, well may the dying mother say with old Simeon, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

She, indeed, leaves them no earthly treasures, to tempt them to make this world their rest. Houses and lands, and gold and silver, she has not to give; nor does she mourn the want of them, as she knows their danger. But she bequeaths to them a legacy infinitely more valuable,—an example of fidelity to duty, and habits of right

doing from the noblest motives. She leaves them lessons of wisdom in the counsels that she has given ; she has laid up for them in heaven a treasure of prayers, which will remain for them a blessing when the grave shall have closed upon her body, and her spirit gone to the blessed estate of them "that die in the Lord." Her small income, her scantily-supplied table, and mean attire will then be forgotten,—her trials and afflictions will then be as though they had never been able to bow the spirit down in sorrow. She is already above the world, and her children are walking in her footsteps. Happy are those children who are blessed with such a mother, and happy she who, favoured by Heaven, is here permitted to suffer with her suffering Master, and to enjoy in time and eternity this glorious recompense.

3. *She is constantly rewarded with the expectation of meeting her beloved friends in heaven.*

In accompanying her husband from place to place in his itinerant labours, she forms acquaintances with many dear friends, to

whom she becomes greatly attached in spirit. To part with these, as she must do, forms one of the greatest trials of the life of the itinerant, and especially of his wife. In calling up the remembrance of them in after life, she finds that some already slumber with the dead, and others are so widely sundered from her, that the hope of meeting on earth is wholly extinguished. But here, too, her faith triumphs. "We hope to meet again," is the language of triumphant Christian faith,—a faith that has, even at present, a great reward. There shall be assembled from the north and the south, from the east and the west, an innumerable company, among whom they who have, to any extent, as willing and self-sacrificing instruments, "turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, forever and ever." Looking forward to, and anticipating this glorious reward, her language now is—

"Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,
Take life or friends away;
But let me find them all again,
In that eternal day."

4. *Her reward is consummated in the glories of the future world.*

There she will meet her Saviour, for whom she now joyfully suffers all these things. This shall be the crowning blessing. The love of Christ constrains her in all her present diligent and self-denying labours and sufferings; then the presence of Christ shall be to her "exceeding great reward." For his sake she now counts all things else but loss; then she shall receive the "hundred-fold" in the world to come. Here she walks by faith, "as seeing Him who is invisible," and is actuated by a "respect to the recompense of reward;" then she "shall see as she is seen," and in the fruition of glory, receive the "crown of righteousness that fades not away." Then shall she be of that great multitude, that John saw in the prophetic vision, standing before the throne "arrayed in white robes," of whom it was said: "These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve

him day and night in his temple ; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.* For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."*

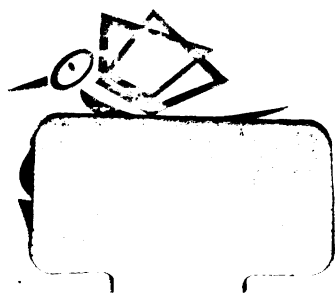
In view of these things, may she not, indeed, go on her way singing—

"In hope of that immortal crown,
I now the cross sustain,
And gladly wander up and down,
And smile at toil and pain,
I suffer on, my threescore years,
Till my Deliverer come,
To wipe away his servant's tears,
And take his exile home."

May this immortal hope sustain all who are now labouring to perform the duties, or who may be suffering any of the trials detailed in the foregoing pages ; and having done all, may they be enabled to commit their souls to God as to a righteous Judge.

THE END.

James M. McKim
New York City
Oct 10 1892



Handwritten text, likely a signature or name, written in cursive script. The text is oriented vertically and appears to be a name, possibly "H. H. H." or similar, followed by a large, stylized flourish or signature.

